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Cut Legal Delays, Shaw Urges ACLU

Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison is the epitome of "insolence in office," the man he prosecuted in connection with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy has charged.

New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw told the New Orleans chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union yesterday "the law's delay"—meaning the "five years, seven months and 20 days" during which Garrison "harassed" him legally — was something it could work toward eliminating.

Shaw, former director of the International Trade Mart, said the entire ordeal was a publicity stunt on Garrison's part. He said the five years boiled down to a 53-minute acquittal by a jury, a point he said was significant. Shaw was acquitted of conspiracy in the assassination.

During the five years he described—which included the time from the first indictment until a federal court order enjoined Garrison from "harassing" him—Shaw said the DA's office was turned into the "most fantastic propaganda machine I've ever seen."

Shaw charged Garrison's efforts were aided by the "local press (which) somehow seemed to feel they had to publish everything the DA's office put out."

He said the international and national press ignored much of the propaganda, but the "local press went quite blindly ahead."

He described parts of his trial as being "like a Perry Mason script," and included an unusual assortment of characters in the form of witnesses for the prosecution.

The most "sinister, dreadful thing, frightening thing" about the proceedings was that three businessmen offered Garrison $10,000 to finance the probe and legal actions against Shaw, which, he said, Garrison accepted.

He called for the ACLU to examine the concept of a private citizen's offering a public official money to bring legal action against another private citizen.

Further action in the Garrison-Shaw episode is the $5 million lawsuit, still pending in court, which Shaw brought against the district attorney, the three New Orleans businessmen and a doctor who allegedly hypnotized a witness during the trial.

The title of Shaw's address: "The Law's Delay—The Insolence of Office" was taken from a speech by Hamlet.